

Message Text

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ACTION EUR-12

INFO OCT-01 ISO-00 CIAE-00 DODE-00 PM-05 H-01 INR-07
L-03 NSAE-00 NSC-05 PA-01 PRS-01 SP-02 SS-15
USIA-06 ACDA-12 OMB-01 EB-08 MCE-00 DOE-11 SOE-02
OES-07 /100 W
-----015287 271154Z /12

R 271123Z DEC 77
FM AMEMBASSY PARIS
TO SECSTATE WASHDC 3579
INFO AMEMBASSY BONN
AMEMBASSY ROME
AMEMBASSY MADRID
USMISSION USNATO
AMEMBASSY LONDON
USNMR SHAPE
USCINCEUR
AMCONSUL MARSEILLE
AMCONSUL BORDEAUX
AMCONSUL LYON
AMCONSUL STRASBOURG
AMCONSUL NICE

C O N F I D E N T I A L SECTION 01 OF 02 PARIS 37564

E.O. 11652: GDS
TAGS: PINT, FR, MARR, GW, FR
SUBJ: MORE FROM COT ON SOCIALIST PROBLEMS

REFS: A. PARIS 37220. B. PARIS 36568 (NOTAL).

1. AT LUNCH WITH POLITICAL COUNSELOR DECEMBER 22,
JEAN-PIERRE COT, A SOCIALIST DEPUTY WHO SPECIALIZES
IN DEFENSE AND EUROPEAN ISSUES, EXPRESSED INTEREST IN
OUR REACTION TO PS LEADER MITTERRAND'S LE MONDE ARTI-
CLES ON DISARMAMENT (REFTEL A). COT SAID HE HAD HAD
A MAJOR ROLE IN WRITING THE ARTICLES, AND THAT THE
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OBJECTIVE WAS TO PREEMPT A SOFTER-LINE APPROACH
EXPECTED TO BE TAKEN AT THE PS CONVENTION ON DEFENSE
NOW SCHEDULED FOR JANUARY 7. HE INDICATED THAT ONE
OF THE REASONS FOR THE POSTPONEMENT OF THE CONVENTION
FROM ITS ORIGINAL DECEMBER DATE WAS BECAUSE THE
"REALISTIC" PROPONENTS OF DEFENSE AND DISARMAMENT
POLICY WERE NOT PARTICULARLY SURE THEY WOULD CARRY THE

DAY (REFTEL B). NOW WITH MITTERRAND AGAIN ON RECORD IN FAVOR OF THE FRENCH NUCLEAR DETERRENT, COT WAS MORE CONFIDENT. HE ALSO CONFIRMED OUR SPECULATION IN REFTEL A THAT THE MITTERRAND PROPOSAL HAD BEEN ALSO DESIGNED TO PREEMPT GISCARD'S SLOW-FORMING INITIATIVE ON DISARMAMENT.

2. POLITICAL COUNSELOR SAID ON PERSONAL BASIS THAT THE IMPORTANCE THE SOCIALIST PARTY ATTACHES TO DISARMAMENT IS VERY WELCOME AND THAT ASPECTS OF THE MITTERRAND PROPOSALS (E.G., GREATER FRENCH PARTICIPATION IN DISARMAMENT NEGOTIATIONS, STRONG STATEMENTS ON NON-PROLIFERATION, EMPHASIS ON CURBING CONVENTIONAL ARMS SALES) ARE POSITIVE. BUT WE HAD RESERVATIONS ABOUT OTHER ASPECTS; IN PARTICULAR, THE MITTERRAND PROPOSAL FOR A CSCE-TYPE FORUM TO DISCUSS A HODGE-PODGE OF DEFENSE ISSUES SEEMED UNREALISTIC AND UNWORKABLE.

3. ON PS RELATIONS WITH OTHER EUROPEAN PARTIES, COT SAID THAT THE MAJOR CONCENTRATION NOW WAS TO KEEP STRONG TIES WITH THE SPD (REFTEL B). BECAUSE OF THIS CONCENTRATION ON THE GERMAN PARTY, AND BECAUSE THE PS IS UP TO ITS NECK IN DOMESTIC POLITICAL PROBLEMS, COT DID NOT FEEL THAT THE PS WOULD DEVOTE MUCH CONCENTRATION TO ITS RELATIONS WITH THE ITALIAN COMMUNIST CONFIDENTIAL

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PARTY. WE UNDERLINED OUR STRONG CONCERN AT WHAT APPEARS TO BE A BID BY THE PCI TO GET INTO GOVERNMENT, AND ASKED IF COT SAW ANY REPERCUSSIONS OF THIS ON THE FRENCH POLITICAL SCENE. HE SAID HE DID NOT THINK THE ENTRY OF COMMUNISTS IN GOVERNMENT IN ITALY WOULD HAVE MUCH EFFECT ON THE LEFT'S FORTUNES IN FRANCE, BUT ADDED THAT THE CONTRARY WAS NOT TRUE--I.E., A LEFT GOVERNMENT IN FRANCE IN HIS VIEW WOULD HAVE APPRECIABLE EFFECT IN ITALY. ON THE PS-SPD RELATIONSHIP, COT SAID IT WAS NOT CERTAIN THAT BRANDT WOULD BE COMING TO FRANCE TO SEE MITTERRAND IN JANUARY, AS HAD BEEN EXPECTED. (WE WONDER IF THIS VISIT MAY HAVE BEEN SHELVED BECAUSE OF SCHMIDT'S CONCERN THAT IT MIGHT ENHANCE THE ELECTORAL PROSPECTS OF THE FRENCH LEFT. WOULD APPRECIATE EMBASSY BONN'S COMMENTS.)

4. ON THE INTERNAL FRENCH SCENE, COT IS PESSIMISTIC ABOUT THE LEFT'S CHANCES FOR A MAJORITY IN THE PARLIAMENT, ALTHOUGH HE EXPECTS A MAJORITY OF VOTES ON THE FIRST ROUND FOR THE LEFT. HE SAID HE COULD NOT TELL IF MITTERRAND WAS ALSO PESSIMISTIC, NOTING THAT MITTERRAND IS TOO SECRETIVE TO LET HIS TRUE FEELINGS

BE KNOWN. THOUGH PERSONALLY ON THE RIGHT WING OF THE
PS, HE SEES NO ALTERNATIVE TO SOCIALIST LINES BEING
KEPT OPEN TO THE FRENCH COMMUNIST PARTY. HE CATEGOR-
ICALLY REJECTS THE POSSIBILITY OF A CENTER-LEFT SOLU-
TION ON THE GROUNDS THAT A SOCIALIST TILT TOWARD

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THE CENTER WOULD LOSE IT MANY VOTES TO THE COMMUNISTS
AND WOULD SPLIT THE PARTY. HE CONCEDED THAT THERE IS
CONSIDERABLE CENTRIST FEELINGS AMONG THE FRENCH VOTERS,
BUT NOTED THAT GISCARD HAS BEEN UNABLE TO CAPITALIZE
ON IT. THEREFORE, A CENTER-LEFT REMAINS A POSSIBLY
DESIRABLE, BUT AT BEST A LONG-TERM, ALTERNATIVE.
HE ALSO REJECTED THE DESIRABILITY OF A PROPORTIONAL
REPRESENTATION ELECTORAL SYSTEM DESIGNED TO STRENGTHEN

THE CENTER, BELIEVING THAT IT WOULD HELP THE
COMMUNISTS BUT NOT THE SOCIALISTS.
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5. ASKED ABOUT THE POSSIBILITY OF SOCIALIST WILLING-
NESS TO GOVERN AS A MINORITY GOVERNMENT, COT SAID THAT
THE PS WOULD PROBABLY BE WILLING TO DO IT IF NECESSARY,
BUT WOULD NOT LIKE IT. HE SAID THE PCF MIGHT TOLERATE
SUCH A SITUATION FOR A YEAR OR SO, PROVIDING SUPPORT
ON SOME ISSUES BUT STAKING OUT AN INDEPENDENT POSITION
ON OTHERS, AND THEN CONTRIBUTE TO FORCING AN
ELECTION IN WHICH IT WOULD ATTACK THE SOCIALISTS FOR
HAVING FAILED. IN LINE WITH HIS OVERALL PESSIMISM,
COT FELT THAT ANY FRENCH GOVERNMENT WHICH EMERGES
FROM THE MARCH ELECTIONS IS LIKELY TO BE WEAK AND
UNSTABLE.

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